

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 271436Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6633
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION SINAI
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EG IS
SUBJECT: GOE STEPS UP PUBLICITY ON THE EASTERN FRONT

REF: CAIRO 9778

SUMMARY. GOE-SPONSORED VISIT OF RESIDENT JOURNALISTS TO BAR-LEV LINE JUNE 26, APPARENTLY TO CONVEY MESSAGE THAT ISRAELIS HAD HAD NO INTENTION WITHDRAWAL FROM EAST BANK OF CANAL AND CONTINUE TO OPPOSE ANY FURTHER WITHDRAWALS. SSM REPORT TO CONGRESS CITED AS EVIDENCE OF ISRAELI VIOLATIONS IN SINAI. WORK ON SUEZ TUNNEL PROGRESSING. VISIT APPEARS TO BE PART OF GOE CAMPAIGN TO ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY OF EGYPTIAN MILITARY PREPAREDNESS BOTH FOR PURPOSES OF NEGOTIATIONS AND TO MAINTAIN CREDIBILITY OF MILITARY OPTION. END SUMMARY.

1. RELIABLE AMERICAN JOURNALIST REPORTS THAT ON JUNE 23 MINISTRY OF INFORMATION HAD INVITED FOREIGN PRESS CORPS TO VISIT SINAI.

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EGYPTIAN JOURNALIST HAD GOTTEN WORD OF VISIT AND ASKED FOR PERMISSION TO ACCOMPANY. GROUP COMPRISING THREE AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS (AP, NBC AND LOS ANGELES TIMES), MOST OF EAST EUROPEANS AND SEVERAL EGYPTIANS MADE VISIT JUNE 26, ACCOMPANIED BY BRIGADIER WHO CLAIMED TO BE COMMANDER OF AREA VISITED. GROUP VISITED THREE SITES ON BAR-LEV LINE INCLUDING FORMER ISRAELI 155 HOWITZER BUNKER AT AYUN MUSA, BUNKER ADJACENT TO

SUEZ AND COMMAND POST 15 KILOMETERS INSIDE SINAI. BRIGADIER SEVERAL TIMES STRESSED THAT THESE BUNKERS HAD BEEN CONSTRUCTED TO BE PERMANENT INSTALLATIONS AND WERE PROOF THAT ISRAEL HAD HAD NO INTENTION OF WITHDRAWING FROM AREA, ADDING THAT SAME IS TRUE TODAY REGARDING ANY FURTHER WITHDRAWALS. BRIGADIER HAD ALSO NOTED THAT INSTALLATIONS WERE VERY EXPENSIVE TO CONSTRUCT AND THE MONEY FOR THEM HAD COME FROM "ISRAEL'S FRIENDS". IN DISCUSSING BUNKERS, BRIGADIER SAID THAT ISRAELIS TALK OF PEACE ONLY FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION BUT ARE NOT SERIOUS. HE CONTRASTED ISRAELI LACK OF SERIOUSNESS WITH DEMONSTRATED EGYPTIAN COMMITMENT TO PEACE AS SHOWN BY RECONSTRUCTION OF CANAL CITIES AND WIDENING OF THE CANAL NOW UNDERWAY. (COMMENT: CONVEYING OF MESSAGE ABOUT ISRAELI OPPOSITION TO WITHDRAWALS SEEMED TO BE MAIN PURPOSE FOR VISIT, ACCORDING TO AMERICAN JOURNALIST.)

2. IN COURSE OF DAY'S BRIEFING BRIGADIER HAD BEEN ASKED ABOUT EGYPT'S MILITARY PREPAREDNESS AND LIKELIHOOD OF NEW WAR. HE HAD RESPONDED: "WE READ IN THE NEWSPAPERS ABOUT FAHMY, VANCE, GROMYKO AND ALL THAT, BUT WE ARE PREPARING TO FIGHT LIKE WE DID ON OCTOBER 6."

HE HASTILY ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS ONLY A MILITARY MAN.

3. VIOLATIONS. BRIGADIER WAS ALSO ASKED ABOUT ACCUSATIONS AND COUNTER-ACCUSATIONS OF ISRAEL, AND EGYPTIAN VIOLATIONS OF SINAI II. HE RESPONDED THAT HE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT ANY VIOLATIONS. ALL PAPERS JUNE 27 REPORT THAT ACCORDING TO SSM REPORT TO THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONGRESS IN APRIL 1977 DURING PREVIOUS SIX MONTHS ISRAEL HAD VIOLATED THE AGREEMENT 11 TIMES WHEREAS EGYPT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ONLY ONE VIOLATION AND THAT THERE WERE 11 OTHER VIOLATIONS WHICH COULD NOT BE ATTRIBUTED TO EITHER SIDE. (COMMENT: THIS APPEARS IN ACCORD WITH SSM REPORT TO THE CONGRESS OF APRIL 13, 1977 WHICH STATES THAT DURING THE PREVIOUS SIX MONTHS THERE WERE 16 MINOR VIOLATIONS OF WHICH "EIGHT WERE AIRCRAFT OVERFLIGHTS; SEVEN WERE SHALLOW SURFACE INTRUSIONS AND ONE INVOLVED DISALLOWED WEAPONS. ELEVEN OF THE MINOR VIOLATIONS WERE ATTRIBUTED TO THE ISRAELIS-- FIVE AIR, FIVE GROUND, AND ONE WEAPONS. NO VIOLATIONS DURING THIS PERIOD WERE ATTRIBUTED TO THE EGYPTIANS." THE PRESS CONVENIENTLY IGNORES, HOWEVER, THAT SFM IS ONLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EARLY WARNING ZONE AND NOT VIOLATIONS IN THE REMAINDER OF THE BUFFER ZONE AND THE LIMITED FORCES ZONES.)

4. JOURNALISTS ALSO VISITED MARTYR AHMAD HAMDI TUNEL (NAMED AFTER COMMANDER OF ENGINEERS WHO WAS KILLED ON FIRST DAY OF OCTOBER WAR) WHICH IS LOCATED 17 KILOMETERS NORTH OF SUEZ. THEY WERE SURPRISED TO FIND WORK THERE WELL UNDER WAY. BRITISH ENGINEERS ON SITE SAID THEY EXPENCTED TO FINISH THE MAIN TUNNEL UNDER THE CANAL IN ABOUT TWO YEARS. HOWEVER, THEY THOUGHT EGYPTIAN GROUP WHICH WAS DOING ALL THE APPROACHES WOULD PROBABLY NOT COMPLETE

THEIR WORK FOR FOUR YEARS. GOE SPOKESMAN HAD SAID PURPOSE OF TUNNEL WAS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS FOR PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT OF SINAI.

5. COMMENT: SINCE JOURNALISTS' TOUR WAS DESIGNED IN FIRST INSTANCE FOR FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS, WE ASSUME IT IS PART OF RECENT GOE CAMPAIGN, WHICH INCLUDED HIGH LEVEL OF PUBLICITY FOR MILITARY MANEUVERS, SPEECHES BY GAMASY AND DELIVERY OF MILITARY SUPPLIES, MOST RECENTLY FROM CHINA (SEPTTEL), TO REFURBISH CREDIBILITY OF SADAT'S STRATEGY THAT SEMBLANCE OF MILITARY PARITY NECESSARY FOR MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS AND THAT IF PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IMPOSSIBLE EGYPT PREPARED TO REVERT TO MILITARY OPTION. MINWAR GAMASY IN SPEAKING TO NAVAL COLLEGE GRADUATES JUNE 25 SAID "EGYPT IS SEEKING A JUST AND LASTING PEACE AND IS DOING EVERYTHING TO ACHIEVE IT. WE SAY THAT IF FIGHTING IS IMPOSED ON US, THE ARMED FORCES WILL PROVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEMSELVES BY PERSISTENCE AND FAITH IN DEFENSE OF HONOR AND JUSTICE."

GOE CAMPAIGN MAY BE STEPPED UP IN VIEW OF HARD LINE STATEMENTS EMANATING FROM NEW ISRAELI LEADERS AND WHAT EGYPTIANS PRIVATELY PERCEIVE AS DETERIORATING MILITARY POSITION VIS-A-VIS ISRAEL. CONCERN OVER ISRAEL MILITARY BUILDUP HAS APPARENTLY SPREAD BEYOND EGYPTIAN MILITARY TO THEIR CIVILIAN COUNTERPARTS. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR TO ARAB LEAGUE TOLD EMBOFF JUNE 27 THAT HE HAD BEEN UP MOST OF PREVIOUS NIGHT IN MEETINGS CONCERNING REPORT IN NEW YORK TIMES OF ALLEGED CARTER ADMINISTRATION DECISION TO SELL ADDITIONAL \$115 MILLION ARMS TO ISRAEL. EILTS

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